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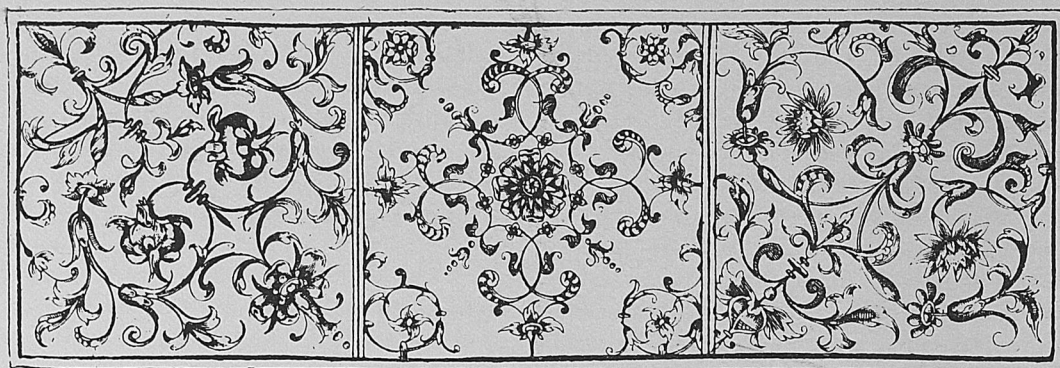
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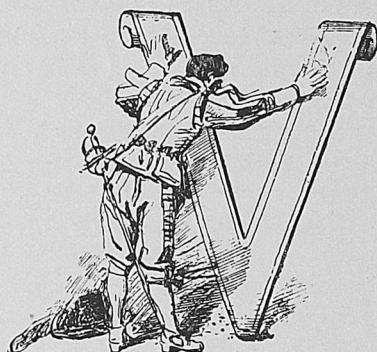
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AN ARTISTS' CLUB.



VARIOUS and generally unsuccessful efforts have been made to establish on a permanent basis a club which should represent the interests and command the united allegiance of the Boston artists. Of course the prime reason for these failures is the fact that the art of painting is not a real and vital interest in the community, but a sort of exotic, which, like the opera, would be gladly adopted by a few people, as an "institution," but of which the great masses know little and care less. It is a grievous mistake to suppose that an art so little regarded can flourish, and it may be that several generations are yet to pass away before the young American who chooses the profession of a painter can reasonably count upon as fair a chance of making a living as the young Frenchman who decides upon the same calling. The artistic "boom," which dates from the Philadelphia Exhibition of 1876, has already begun to reveal its frothy character. Very few of us take the art seriously. Every other girl of sixteen "paints" (pictures); and is not one picture as good as another, or nearly so? Those who have travelled a certain distance along the endless road of art have perhaps too little patience with the sporadic and trifling manifestations of æsthetic life which are so numerous now; but no sign of an impulse in that direction, be it ever so puerile, should be scorned. Possibly there may be a providence that shapes the ends of Kensington and Lustra

painters; and it may be that in the eyes of Apollo not even a single brass placque is decorated by dainty hands in vain. The present mischief of all this play-art is that it makes so many otherwise intelligent people take all art for play. It is getting to be believed, in this blessed country, that anybody can do anything without so much as serving the briefest apprenticeship.

Another very potent reason why the Boston artists hitherto have not been able to coöperate is to be found in their own unfortunate temperaments. I say unfortunate, because in the present crude state of our society, and perhaps in any state of society, there is no doubt that the sensitive, artistic temperament is a source of more pain than pleasure to its possessor. Painters, sculptors, musicians, actors, poets and architects are notoriously an irritable and quarrelsome class. The amount of scandal and backbiting among them is simply disheartening and disgusting. Of course this natural propensity is aggravated by poverty, neglect, and want of appreciation, and in some cases it becomes almost a mania. A certain amount of frank, mutual criticism is a wholesome thing, no doubt, but the men are many and include some of the most mediocre artists, who apparently cannot endure it, even when it is offered in the friendliest spirit, and for a word of candid blame will throw over the friendship of a lifetime and nurse their wrath for years. There is something akin to the nature of a child in the artist's avidity for praise and his fiendish hostility towards those who rebuke him, and the greater a man is the more childlike he is in certain regards. The lamented George Fuller was so; and the hearty, jovial, boyish character and ways of poor Johnny Johnston will always be remembered with peculiar tenderness by those who

knew him. There is, after all, something of the boy in those men who amount to anything.

The Paint and Clay Club stands for the most recent and most hopeful effort to unite the Boston artists in one body for mutual aid and comfort. How far it has succeeded is to be shown by the records of its exhibitions, by its list of members, and, in an equally important respect, by its *morale*. The club was founded in 1879, and held its first two exhibitions in 1881 and 1882 in its own picturesque room on Washington street. These displays were highly successful, both in regard to the attendance and sales and the impression made on the public, which, always fond of novelty, enjoyed climbing four steep and dusty flights of stairs to visit an art exhibition in a huge and lofty garret. This room has always been the club's home, and a better place it would be hard to find. It was decorated by Rinn (architect) and Bartlett (sculptor) several years ago. The walls are colored a brick red, and high-relief heads of the Norseman and an Indian ornament at each end of the long chamber, which has alcoves at each extremity and an immense dome-like skylight. Pictures of various sorts adorn the warm walls—Ames' study for his portrait of Lincoln, etchings, charcoal drawings, reproductions of Courbet's "Quarry," and of a portrait of an old woman by Holbein, likenesses of Hunt, Fuller and Johnny Johnston; and each house committee makes it an agreeable part of its duty to vary the hanging. The long table, the little tables, the unspeakably beautiful stove, the stone beer mugs, the draped divans, the fish-net hangings, the antiquated desk and mirror, the grand piano,—all these are identified with long and jolly winter evenings, with innumerable debates, bouts of whist, wreaths of fragrant tobacco smoke, and an atmosphere of congenial, artistic ease and fellowship.

In 1882 there were thirty-two members, forming a list which may be divided into the following classes:—

Painters: Carlsen, Cole, Edwards, Fuller, Gaugengigl, Halsall, Johnston, Metcalf, Millet, F. D., Ordway, Pierce, C. F., Rogers, Sandham, Selinger, Turner, J. R., Wasson, Waterman—17.

Illustrators: Attwood, Garrett, Taylor—3.

Architects: Rinn, Tobey—2.

Musicians: Chadwick, Marshall, Preston—3.

Engraver: Closson—1.

Picture dealers: Chase, Lowell—2.

Journalists: Baxter, Millett, J. B.—2.

Sculptor: Bartlett—1.

Lawyer: Sigourney Butler—1.

It will be observed that out of 32 members a majority were painters, while full 27, including the musicians, might be classified as artists. About the same proportion has been maintained during the past four years. At all times it has been distinctly an artists' club. At present the 53 members are to be classified as follows:—

Painters: Allen, Barse, Caliga, Cole, Carlsen, Coolidge, Davis, Ellwell, Edwards, Enneking, Flagg, Graves, Gaugengigl, Grund-

mann, Halsall, Hassam, Little, Mason, Metcalf, Ordway, Peirce, H. W., Pierce, C. F., Rogers, Robinson, Sandham, Smith, E. B., Selinger, Stone, Strain, Tuckerman, Triscott, Vonnoh, Walker, H. O., Wasson, Waterman—35.

Illustrators: Attwood, Garrett, Taylor—3.

Architects: Rinn, Tobey, Walker, C. H.—3.

Musicians: Elson, Winch—2.

Engravers: Andrew, Closson—2.

Journalists: Baxter, Downes, Weeks—3.

Sculptors: Bartlett, French, Kitson—3.

Publishers: Lowell, Millet, J. B.—2.

This classification shows that as the club grows larger the proportion of painters in it increases. To those who are more or less familiar with the names of these artists it will be manifest that the predominant element in the club is "young blood." The veterans are Ordway, Cole, Enneking, Robinson, Tuckerman, Bartlett and Waterman, and it is safe to say that three of these are not yet fifty, and none of them except Ordway much above fifty. To show in a rather striking way how very youthful the whole affair is it is only necessary to say, for instance, that when Allston died, forty-three years ago, more than half of the members were yet unborn.

So much for the material of which the club is composed. We have now to inquire as to its *morale*. As with persons of strongly-marked character, it is a law unto itself; unlike any club that ever existed; it has its moods of industry and lassitude, of high spirits and low; and rash indeed would be the Yankee who should venture to guess what the club's sentiments might be on any subject whatever before "the sense of the meeting" had been taken. There is only one thing that can be taken for granted in advance of all debate—that the club will conclude to do exactly the opposite to that which any other club under the sun would do under similar circumstances. The dead-level of commonplace things and people is its one *bête noir*. It is quite likely that in its incessant efforts to avoid the beast it has impressed some people as affecting eccentricities. Eccentric it may be, judged by the common standards, but certainly it is innocent of affectation. The decorations and arrangement of the gallery in which the Sketch Exhibition was held last season struck some minds as eccentric, and there were people who stood aghast at the idea of petitioning the city to remove the Cogswell fountain from the common. Of such eccentricities, if these be eccentricities, the club is doubtless proud. It is useless to deny that a hopeless gulf yawns between those who admire the Cogswell fountain and those who don't, and it is to be feared that the honorable alderman who expressed the opinion that the fountain was "a thing of beauty" will never understand the motives of the Paint and Clay men. There was no desire for notoriety on their part, nor did they wish to set themselves above the rest of the community in matters of taste; but a righteous indigna-

tion stirred them to action, and in exercising the right of petition, which the humblest citizen may use, they took the initiative in a cause which is seldom enough brought to the attention of the authorities, and builded better than they knew. This is not the last of the case of Art 7's. Humbug.

After 1882 the Paint and Clay Club began to avail itself of the brotherly courtesy of the Art Club, and to use the fine gallery of the latter for its annual exhibitions. Two of its best displays were made there, in 1884 and 1885 respectively. This year it was considered expedient to hang the exhibition in a dealer's gallery, but it is not likely that the experiment will be repeated. It is scarcely necessary to state that the five regular yearly exhibitions mentioned have been of admirable quality. Take this year's catalogue, and the names and titles speak for themselves:—

Allen: A Berkshire Pastoral.
 Attwood: Ireland à la Ruskin.
 Barse: A Plaster Shop.
 Brown: The Old Mill at Cleeve.
 Caliga: Portrait of Bob.
 Carlsen: Une Plumeuse.
 Cole: New England Farm in October.
 Coolidge: Thanksgiving Day on Charles River.
 Davis: Village on the Plain.
 Edwards: Bank of a Shining River.
 Enneking: Passing Shower, Milton.
 Elwell: Moonrise Among Shipping, Antwerp.
 French: Portrait Bust.
 Garrett: Spanish Street.
 Gaugengigl: Le Choix Forcé.
 Halsall: An Easterly at Nahant.
 Hassam: Rain and Vapor, Berkeley-street Bridge.
 Johnston: Squantum Marshes.
 Little: The Margin of the Sea.
 Mason: Florentine Mandolin Player.
 Metcalf: Landscape.
 Ordway: Meadows in Wellington.
 Selinger: My Grandmother's Bonnet.
 Peirce, H. W.: Vision of May.
 Pierce, C. F.: Early Spring.

Smith: The New Era.
 Sandham: A Canadian Oven.
 Stone: A Head.
 Strain: Moorish Courtyard.
 Vinton: Portrait of Senator Hoar.
 Vonnoh: Portrait of a Boy.
 Walker: Idyl.
 Wasson: Foggy Morning; Isle au Haut.
 Waterman: Maroon Among the Merchants.

I do not need to apologize for recalling such a suggestive list as this. No exhibition of distinctly local character has ever equalled it in Boston, and it was, moreover, remarkable for its strong personal quality. In portraiture, landscape, marines and still-life it excelled any previous showing of the club; in figure-pieces and genres it was not deficient, though these lacked importance; and in animal pictures it only fell behind the exhibition of 1884, which had almost an excess of cows, bulls and calves. My review of the club's exhibitions, slight though it be, would be incomplete without at least a passing reference to the Caricature Exhibition of 1885 and the Sketch Exhibition of last spring. Why was it that the former was a popular success and that the latter was not? Because the element of humor is understood and appreciated by every one, and art is the language of the few. There were some visitors who enjoyed the sketch show heartily, but the majority did not comprehend it at all. To the latter class art is not so much a matter of emotion as of logic, and a slight sketch says nothing to them. Their attitude of mind towards pictures is defiant. In the witty comedy of "Monsieur Poirier," the matter-of-fact old gentleman, a type of the *bourgeois*, gives his opinion as to what a picture should be: A lonely seashore, where the waves beat ceaselessly, a man's hat, and a dog howling for his master. That, to M. Poirier's mind, told its story.

William Howe Downes

